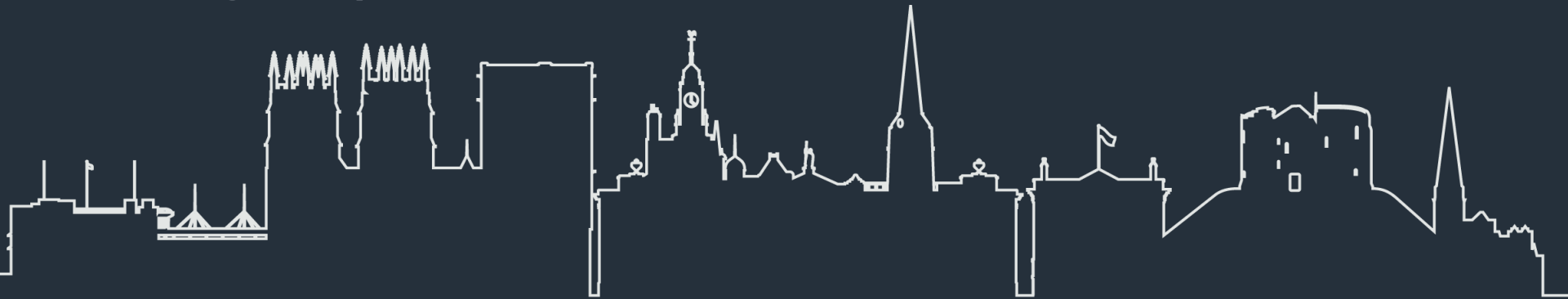


York: Keeping a busy city clean

**Cllr Claire Douglas, Leader City of York
Council**

15th July 2026

**Dave Atkinson, Director of Environmental
and Regulatory Services**



York: One City for All

“York is loved by many millions, within the city, the UK, and the world. Our beautiful built heritage, our history of pioneering social change ahead of its time, and our vibrant economy set us apart from many cities of an equivalent size

We're committed to working so everyone can enjoy the strengths and successes of the city, and be able to live happier and healthier lives”



Working together to improve and make a difference

York: One City for All

Council Plan EACH principles:

- **E**qualities and Human Rights
- **A**ffordability
- **C**limate (Climate Change Strategy)
- **H**ealth

High quality public realm in York is critical to achieving these outcomes



Burton Green Primary pupils at Ashton Avenue Play Area



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Responding to budget pressures

- York third lowest core spending power per head now, and will be lowest nationally outside London by 2028/9
- Balancing public expectations with constrained budgets
- Any new investment in the Public Realm service will focus on priority issues, rather than fitting into routine work schedules
- Recent service innovation:
 - Agile Graffiti team; New Neighbourhood Caretakers team
 - Improving services like weed control (brought in-house). Commitment to reducing chemical use



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Neighbourhood Model

- York moving to new Neighbourhood Model where key services are based in four locality areas
- Model focuses on bringing services together: health, voluntary and community sector services, housing, parks and open spaces, to improve early intervention and prevention and to build community capacity closer to where people live
- Service innovation includes introduction of new Neighbourhood Caretakers Team



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Neighbourhood Caretakers

- CYC introduced new Neighbourhood Caretakers Team - an Administration pledge - to better maintain public spaces and encourage 'Pride in Place'
- Visible difference in neighbourhoods by tackling issues important to the community, identified by residents, councillors and council staff teams
- Tasks completed by Neighbourhood Caretakers two weeks after being identified on ward walkabouts
- Intensive focus on an area for fixed period
- High level of job satisfaction



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Before - off Leeman Road



During



Working together to improve and make a difference

After ✓ vegetation removed
✓ Area tidied up



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Neighbourhood Caretakers

- Over 90% of identified tasks are completed by the NC team or other operational teams
- All tasks identified are logged and reported through the Council's CRM system, inc. non-Neighbourhood Caretaker tasks
- This is part of our 'see it, say it, sort it' model, where we encourage staff to report issues relevant to any council services
- NC Team is a team working alongside the Public Realm team to enhance and expand on business-as-usual operations



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Working with Communities

- York fortunate to have a strong volunteering culture. Residents actively report issues (litter, fly-tipping, bins, etc.) online
- Strong culture of community clean-up initiatives and local pride eg volunteer litter picks
- Growing use of digital reporting tools and resident engagement channels
- Embedding a “Report-it / we’ll fix it” model
- Transitioning to a partnership model with communities, charities, local groups etc



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Partnerships

- Strong partnerships with York Business Improvement District (BID) and Make it York supporting a vibrant, clean and safe city
- Established relationships with environmentally focused organisations such as St Nick's and The Conservation Volunteers



Cleanliness is part of the Purple Flag accreditation criteria



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Partnerships

- Effective joint working with the Community Safety Partnership to ensure environmental crime is tackled quickly and consistently
- Growing collaboration with universities, businesses, and volunteers to support community initiatives and improve the public realm (*including Green Flag accredited parks and open spaces*)
- Opportunities to expand co-delivery and shared ownership of local services



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York's Green Flag Parks

- Hull Road Park (newly awarded July 2026)
- Glen Gardens
- Clarence Gardens
- Rowntree Park
- West Bank Park

Green Flag status wouldn't be possible without the fantastic contributions of volunteers across the city



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Data-led and standards-based approach

- The council implements an output-based approach, using DEFRA cleanliness standards (Grades A–D)
- Also uses local data to guide activity, with overall aim to maintain standards and prevent streets falling to Grade C/D
- Uses incident reporting systems and open datasets to track issues and performance
- This reflects a shift toward evidence-based, outcome-focused service delivery, rather than purely routine work



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Core street cleaning service

- City of York Council runs a structured, city-wide street cleansing operation that reflects the pride residents and the council have in our city:
 1. City centre cleaning – footstreets are cleaned minimum daily, and more often in busy periods
 2. Other parts of the city – streets are cleaned daily, weekly or monthly, based on need
- Use of mechanical road and pavement sweepers and manual litter picking teams
- Litter and dog-waste bins emptied weekly or more frequently, as needed



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Core street cleaning service



- Rapid response standards:
 - urgent hazards (e.g. broken glass, needles): ~2 hours
 - routine issues: within ~3 working days
- This is a baseline operational model where responsiveness is informed by risk-based prioritisation
- In 2026, we opted to bring weed management in-house due to inconsistent results. We now use resources more efficiently, with sweeping equipment complementing weed spraying
- We've empowered communities to choose: some have opted out of glyphosate spraying, with volunteers weeding their own areas
- The service delivers 2 sprays per year and to date we've seen vast improvements in weed control

A dark silhouette of the York skyline, featuring various buildings and spires.

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Agile graffiti response

- Part of Highways service, with “can do” approach to solving issues
- Agreements with utilities to expedite removal
Acting quickly discourages build up
- Graffiti removal kits for community clean ups
- Work closely with Safer York Partnership to identify hotspots



Working together to improve and make a difference

Thank you!

Any questions?

